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ON SOME OF THE USES

OF

Galvanic and Faradic Baths.

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BY

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*Presented by
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GALVANIC AND FARADIC BATHS.

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NEW YORK.

I DEEM it the duty of every physician whom circumstances afford the opportunity of making observations that possess physiological or therapeutic value, to lay before his colleagues not only the facts as they have presented themselves to him, but also his views relative to these, in order that from a multitude of opinions may be culled, in the course of time, the truths which are destined to become scientific facts and principles. This seems to me peculiarly requisite where the physiological and therapeutic effects of a new or recent method are involved, to bring which to its proper worth and standard is as desirable in the interests of science as in those of humanity.

I have had for the last year, and still continue to have, occasion daily to supervise the administration of electrical baths (both galvanic and faradic), and I now propose to lay before the profession the outlines of some

cases illustrative of their therapeutic value. These cases are by no means especially interesting in themselves. Even if I had cited such, I could not in this connection have afforded them their merited space. If, therefore, my description of cases should appear to some incomplete and superficial, I beg to say to these that I have not made even an attempt to individualize any case, but have cited each one only to serve as an illustration of the effects of a remedy.

I must for the present refrain from a consideration of the physiological effects of the baths, my experience being as yet too limited to serve as a basis for the grounding of physiological facts.

CASE I. *Rheumatism*.—Mr. F., from the practice of Dr. Alexander Murray, about thirty-two years of age, of robust appearance, large, vigorous frame, had an attack of acute inflammatory rheumatism in the spring of 1873, from which he recovered in a short time. In the winter of 1874 he experienced a second attack, for which he had had treatment for about two months prior to coming under Dr. M.'s care. After treating him by other methods, including local galvanic applications to the affected parts (joints as well as muscles were involved), for two weeks, Dr. M. sent patient to take electrical baths. On May 25th Mr. F. was brought in a carriage. He was not able to walk, and had to be assisted up the steps by two attendants. His arms were in a scarcely better condition, the wrist-joints especially being exceedingly painful and tender. The first and second baths, administered respectively on

May 25th and 29th, did not effect much change in his condition. The third bath was taken on May 30th, with the happiest results. On June 1st patient was able to come for his fourth bath alone and on foot, and thenceforth his recovery was very rapid. The seventh bath, taken June 7th, left him perfectly cured, not a trace of the disease remaining. He has been free from rheumatism since. In the first three baths the galvanic current was employed exclusively, the muscles and tendons being in too tender a condition to bear the contractions induced by strong faradic currents. In the subsequent baths both currents were used, according to indications.

CASE II. *Constipation*.—Emil Miller, a bright child two years of age, was brought July 7th, 1874. He had suffered from obstinate constipation almost from his birth. Had been under the care of several physicians, but had never received any benefit from treatment. Even with the aid of powerful cathartics, given in doses suitable for an adult rather than a child, defecation took place only once in every three or four days, and was so exceedingly painful as to elicit cries of pain from the child, who had to be forced to the chamber on every one of these occasions. The fæces were always hard and lumpy, and lighter in color than normal. A digital examination per rectum revealed considerable flaccidity. My diagnosis was, *paresis of the muscularis of the intestine*. I ordered faradic baths. I preferred these to local faradization for several reasons, to elucidate which would occupy too much space

here. On July 12th the first bath was administered, and I must confess that the result was a perfect surprise to me. True, I had expected a cure to take place; but I looked for gradual improvement, and was not prepared for a result such as was here obtained. *From the time the first bath was taken, defecation took place regularly once a day, without pain; the faces became perfectly normal in color and consistency, and the boy has to the present day defecated regularly and normally in every respect.* To insure permanency, however, the baths were at first continued about twice a week, then once a week, but have now been discontinued for some time. No other therapeutic measures, either internal or external, were resorted to in this case, neither was there any change made in the diet of the child.

CASE III. *Mercurial Stomatitis*.—Mr. S., about thirty-five years of age, came to me for treatment in the fall of 1872. He then had indurated chancre, two buboes, and syphilitic sore throat. He had had the chancre for six weeks before applying to me, but was, as he said, ashamed to consult a physician. Before medication had had time to make any impression on his system, roseola appeared. The syphilis was very obstinate in this patient, compelling me to keep him under the influence of mercury for a long time. In October, 1873, the patient presented himself to me with a very aggravated mercurial stomatitis. The usual remedies, both internal and local, made little or no impression on the affection. On November 11th I advised patient to discontinue all other measures, and

try a course of galvanic baths. He took his first bath on the same day. This was repeated every other day until six baths had been taken, when all symptoms of the disease had disappeared. The descending galvanic current was used throughout.

CASE IV. *Locomotor Ataxia*.—Mr. W.—, æt. forty-eight, came to consult me January 12th, 1874. He had then felt the symptoms of locomotor ataxia for about six years. Had been unable for several years to walk without the aid of a cane. When walking he dragged his right leg along in a semicircle, and was able to accomplish very short distances only. There were almost complete anæsthesia and great paresis of the bladder. The same conditions were observable in regard to the bowels. Anæsthesia of both lower extremities existed, complete in every respect in the right leg, almost so in the left. Dyspepsia and general debility and emaciation accompanied the disease. Treatment was begun on January 15th. I prescribed phosphorus and cod-liver oil, and passed a strong galvanic current through the spine for probably ten minutes. January 16th, a galvanic bath was administered. Towards the close of the bath (which occupied twenty minutes) patient thought he felt some sensation in his legs. The baths were taken every two or three days, alternating with strong galvanizations of the spine. While taking his second bath, patient remarked that "his right leg felt warm for the first time in six years." The treatment as described was continued for about six weeks, during the

latter part of which the local applications were gradually diminished in frequency, the baths being continued regularly. Medication was discontinued about this time. About the middle of March Mr. W. was enabled to resume his occupation (paymaster's assistant on Erie Railway). His improvement had been rapid and steady. All the symptoms gradually disappeared, and in the beginning of April the patient was, with the exception of some feebleness consequent on his protracted illness, as well as ever. He continues so to the present day. He still takes two or three baths a month, but has had no other treatment since May. He walks freely without a cane, and talks jocosely of running foot-races. All functions are performed normally.

Although in this case the baths were not employed exclusively, yet they predominated in the treatment; and if the judgment of the patient, a very intelligent gentleman, is to be relied on, a large share of the success is due to the baths.

CASE V. *Rheumatism*.—Mr. B—y, æt. twenty-two, came for treatment on August 27th, 1874. Had sub-acute rheumatism, with considerable swelling of ankle-joints. The acute attack dated back six weeks. Locomotion was very painful, and could be accomplished only with the aid of a cane. A galvanic bath on the 27th, and one on the 28th of August were sufficient to remove both swelling and pain, enabling the patient to resume his avocation.

CASE VI. *Mercurio-Syphilitic Cachexia*.—Mr. L., æt.

twenty-seven, had primary syphilis about four years ago. Subsequently had inveterate constitutional symptoms, for which he was under medical treatment both here and in Europe. When he had sojourned in the latter country some time, he was pronounced cured by his physicians. He married, and returned to this country in the fall of 1872. A few weeks after his return he fell into a gradual decline, which confined him to the house—and part of the time to bed—for eight months, during the latter portion of which he had discontinued all medical treatment. It was with difficulty that, assisted by his wife, he managed to reach my office. I found him terribly enfeebled; greatly emaciated; sallow complexion. He was much annoyed by rheumatic pains, which I considered specific. His condition was so exceedingly low that I decided to postpone all medication until he should be stronger. I ordered galvano-faradic baths, *i.e.*, the galvanic current in the bath as an eliminative, the faradic as a tonic. The first bath was taken on November 20th, 1873. For one month he took the baths, and nothing else. He was then so much stronger that I felt justified in instituting a mild specific course of treatment, the baths being continued as theretofore. At the end of two months the patient was nearly as strong as ever, was able to resume his occupation, and had gained twenty-seven pounds in weight.

CASE VII. *Chorea*.—Hugh O—I, æt. twelve, from the practice of Dr. J. O. Farrington; one of the severest cases of chorea I have ever seen; had been afflicted four

years. Was sent February 5th to take electrical baths. Between that date and March 23d, took seventeen baths, steadily improving. Internal medication was attended to by Dr. F. The boy made a complete recovery.

CASE VIII. *Impotency*.—Mr. F., from the practice of Dr. Caro, a robust gentleman, æt. thirty-six, full of muscular vigor. Had had syphilis, the symptoms of which had disappeared under Dr. C.'s treatment. For two years the power of erection, as well as sexual appetite, had become extinct, if we except an occasional imperfect spontaneous erection on waking up in the morning, and even this was of rare occurrence. Ordinary medication proving inadequate, Dr. C. sent patient to take electrical baths. From March 7th to July 16th Mr. F. used the baths, averaging about two weekly. He was then, and still remains, perfectly restored.

CASE IX. *Hysteria*.—Mrs. A., from the practice of Dr. Kremer, æt. 28, married, sterile, was sent by Dr. K. to take baths on June 12th, 1874. Intense pruritus, transient flushing and heat of the entire surface, with pricking sensations and headache, were the more prominent symptoms. Six galvano-faradic baths effected a complete and permanent cure.

CASE X. *Specific Synovitis of Knee-joint, with considerable Effusion in and around Joint*.—Mr. C., from the practice of Dr. Sheppard, æt. about 35. First saw patient at his house on Nov. 9th, 1873, in consultation with Dr. S. and Dr. Hutchinson, of Providence, R. I. Had been on mercury and iodide of potassium for a

long time. When I first saw him, he had been incapacitated from work for about a year. Had been unable to leave the house for three months. The affected joint was very much enlarged, with little or no motility, the condition being practically the same as true ankylosis. It was decided to substitute tonics for the specific treatment, and to administer galvanic baths. On Nov. 11th the first bath was administered; another on the 15th, and a third on the 19th. Considerable improvement in motility was then apparent. Two more baths, taken respectively on the 22d and 29th, effected some reduction in the size of the knee. The baths were continued to January 3d, 1874, when the effusion had become almost entirely absorbed, and the joint perfectly mobile. The patient then had been for some time taking daily walks, unassisted. He now (Jan. 3d) walks without any difficulty, has regained his normal vigor, and is practically well.

CASE XI. *General Neurasthenia of a Hysterical Type.*—Mrs. E., from the practice of Dr. Krehbiel, æt. about 28, married, of an exceedingly nervous temperament, had suffered from great nervous irritability and prostration since her last confinement (about a year previous). Was sent by her physician to take galvanic baths, April 21st, 1874. Cases of this kind are too familiar to every physician to render a detailed description of the symptoms desirable. Six galvanic-faradic baths restored her to perfect health.

CASE XII. *Sub-hemiplegia from Cerebral Hemor-*

rhage.—Mrs. S., æt. 30, married, from the practice of Dr. Krehbiel, was sent by Dr. K. to take baths July 3d, 1874. It was a routine case, differing in no respect from what is ordinarily observed as a sequence of cerebral hemorrhage. Six baths, taken at intervals of two and three days, restored almost entirely the muscular power of the affected side.

I have taken the above twelve cases at random from a large number of which I have notes. I have not included among them any case of neurosis of the sympathetic, although I have had occasion to observe and to treat, by electrical baths and otherwise, a large number of affections of the sympathetic system, with very satisfactory results. I have purposely omitted these cases, because I felt that I could not do them justice in this connection. They possess sufficient pathological interest to entitle them to especial individual consideration, and for this I reserve them. I will merely state that I have met with affections of the sympathetic much more frequently than I could have been led to anticipate from any books or statistics on the subject. I will state here also, that in all forms of *agrypnia* I have found electrical baths superior to any hypnotic of the materia medica.

A word on the mode of action of electrical baths. I have been asked repeatedly by physicians, in what respect these baths differ from "general electrization"—galvanization or faradization, as may be the case. I have never had any difficulty in convincing any one

who asked me this question, not only that there is a vast difference between electrical baths, *properly administered*, and general electrization, but that *electrical baths are the only real general electrization*, what has been known under that name being neither more nor less than *alternate local electrization*. A moment's reflection will make it apparent that general electrization, as expressive of electrical baths, and alternate local electrization, as expressive of methods advanced under the title of "general faradization," etc., must differ vastly in their effects. A process by which the galvanic current is made to impinge simultaneously on *all* the peripheral endings of nerves, must have reflex effects that can never be obtained from a like influence brought to bear within the domain of a single nerve only, or even several. Again, where every organ in the body (excepting of course the head and face) is traversed at one and the same time by the galvanic current, an alterative effect is obtained that is unapproached by any other remedy or method that I know of. By the use of the faradic current in the baths, in place of single muscles, or at best a group of muscles, being affected, as is the case in local faradization, all or nearly all the muscles of the body can be brought into action at one and the same time, or the action of the current can be limited to certain of the extremities, the entire abdomen, etc., *ad libitum*. It is scarcely necessary for me to adduce further facts in order to show that the two procedures are anything but identical. No one can be more appreciative than

myself of the therapeutic value of the methods the *appellation* of which I object to, or more ready to concede the advantages they possess. But to call "general" that which is "local," is an etymological incongruity which is the more to be deprecated when permitted to creep into the nomenclature of a science where exactitude is one of the first desiderata.

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